

It is this mutual exploration of the dreaming realm that brings the night world into our lives in a powerful and immediate way. The oneric tales we tell and hear move us in profound ways we cannot hope to describe fully in the use-oriented language of the day world. The dream group ritual calls our hearts into a being with others as we follow our dreams together.

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**Winifred Rushforth**

#### **THE ANALYTIC DREAM GROUP**

*Winifred Rushforth has pioneered therapeutic and creative group work in Scotland through the Davidson Clinic (for which she received the O.B.E.), the Salisbury Centre and the Sempervivum Trust and now aged 95 is still active as a psychiatrist and New Age catalyst. Her new book **Something is Happening** has just been published by Turnstone Press.*

The dream group is, as far as I know, a fairly recent approach to seeking and finding our way into the Unconscious. My own experience of it dates back to 1958 in which year I left my work in Edinburgh very abruptly to travel to New Zealand, where my younger son was seriously ill. This dates the first dream group which I then handed over to a colleague and which took up again on my return eight months later. The group had originated with the reading of P.W. Martin's **Experiment in Depth** but gradually, I think, we moved over to the sharing of our dreams. We had no rules laid down. Literature regarding the Jung-Senoï method in California and Montague Ullman's books came some twenty years later.

In the Davidson Clinic, from that time on, one or more dream groups would come into being and fade out again. My colleagues had little use for them and when I gave up my position as Hon. Medical Director in 1965 there were audible sighs of relief - "No more group work. No more Summer Schools. We can get on with the one-to-one analysis". Within four years four members of the staff had died, in each case without having been able to distribute the cases to which they had committed themselves.

For a patient suddenly, in the midst of analysis, to face the abrupt cessation of the process and the consequent fear and anger is extremely serious and some of the deserted patients threatened suicide. Hence the analytic dream groups which are now well established in Edinburgh, loosely held together by the Sempervivum Movement. At present ten of these meet weekly for periods of roughly ten sessions. I find myself responsible for six of these and I am aware that much is happening in each group and in a strange way between the groups. Our youngest member is Gilbert whose parents bring him in a carry cot, and although I have not an exact contemporary I am glad to say that no one is too old to join, and I like to remember words that were written to me recently after I had given a talk to Old Age Pensioners in Aberdeen - "You left us with the message that neither youth or age matters but only the passing moment and the use we make of it".

I would like to record here a dream contributed by one of my patients who has since died. He came into the group very eager to tell us his dream: so we listened -

*"I was standing on a hill looking down into a valley. The opposite side flattened out into a plateau and as I watched I saw people gathering. Six or eight of them joined hands and danced in a circle. As I watched, others gathered, formed rings and danced. In the end there were five or six such circles and I became aware that they were joined together so that they stirred each other into action and soon all were moving".*

How strangely precognitive! Now the Edinburgh groups are linked with others in London and across the Atlantic we are linked with Montague Ullman in New York. Jenny, one of my grand-daughters, has on arriving in New York made no delay in joining. Her mother, Diana, has two weekly sessions here in Edinburgh. Much is happening on the plateau of that dream.

With these years of experience I ask myself - and perhaps you too are asking - what rules are being laid down for the guidance of members? Very few must be the answer. The Unconscious does not abide by rules; it takes chances; it watches opportunities. It interrupts logical discussions. Time is precious, an hour-and-a-half the time allocated; so a dream should be presented as soon as the group has gathered. No rigidity is observed about which chair you occupy nor about who is to begin. Quite often a dream very much wants to be told, yes, then get on with it. The leader, (and I believe there should be a leader chosen because of his/her own depth analysis) watches the reaction of the members. Some are at once on the 'qui vive', alert, visualizing, identifying themselves with the dream and the dreamer but it may take skill and leadership to make sure that all are involved. And again this may not be possible and we cannot make it happen, but all watch, hoping the participation is coming. The Americans use the word 'facilitator', perhaps a better word than 'leader'.

**Appreciation of the dream.** The facilitator must stimulate interest in it, try to elucidate its details but still with reserve and respect for the dreamer's defences. I found myself recently using a good Scots word in this connection - 'speir' or 'speer'. Don't speer too hard at this point, don't press your questions beyond the dream. Curiosity is valuable but hold it in check. Like all the instinctive drives it is a good servant and a bad master.

**What about interpreting the dream?** Quite often a spontaneous interpretation is presented immediately either by the dreamer or by one of the group. This must be accepted but not allowed to block further work on the dream. All dreams have great possibilities in their message. "Tread lightly for you tread on my dreams". So we keep a gentle touch and are aware that we need not squeeze the last drop out of any dream.

Then the references to past dreams presented not only by the present dreamer but also by others in the group.

Dreams take us into 'the unconscious', the area where all minds can meet. The analogy is with the ocean with its mingling of currents and waves. Any one drop may touch any other. My dream groups are loosely organized. We don't use a tape recorder, nor indeed keep any records except through the contributions of individual members' memories. These keep track and by so doing weld the group and increase its value.

I am not sure to what extent other leaders (or facilitators) contribute their own dreams but my practice is to respond to any request the group may make. Weeks often pass without this happening. When requested I usually say that I shall record the next dream which I recollect on waking and bring it to the next meeting. This avoids the temptation to pick out something which might put me in a favourable light. Very occasionally I open the group by demanding that they should listen to what I have dreamt since, on occasion I feel that my dream is more than personal and needs to be shared. When a group member persistently refuses to contribute his/her own material while willingly discussing that of the other members, I find that the group is likely to turn on him or her and make them realize their unacceptability.

And can we be more definite about results? Statistics as to the condition of the psyche are obviously ridiculous. On some occasions nothing much seems to happen; at other times insights are arrived at that give us a good sense of worthwhileness. Over a period of time, longer or shorter with individuals, we begin to hear remarks "Since coming to the group" or "Before coming to the group" and are glad to see that something is happening. Can we assess, perhaps it is asked, how long we should continue our attendances? Freud's last book was called 'Analysis Terminable or Interminable' and his thesis is that the Unconscious is the repository of unfathomable potential so that analysis is always profitable and that we should expect increase of wisdom, understanding, ability to forgive, freedom from anxiety, release of tension, occurring progressively as we are mindful of our dreaming. Perhaps we can claim that this process probably can go on expanding when we are able to share the insights of our neighbours and realize how many problems are common to all. Therefore there is also a mutual shared acceptance of the awareness that we can be liberated from the old conditioning of guilt and fear which belong to time past and not to the present here and now.

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